



Center for Behavioral Health Studies



What About Clinical Depression

What are the causes of clinical depression?

Clinical depression is a common and highly treatable illness affecting over 19 million American adults. Clinical depression commonly co-occurs with general medical illnesses, though it often goes undetected and untreated.

A depressive disorder is a group of symptoms that reflect a sad mood exceeding normal sadness or grief. More specifically, the sadness of depression is characterized by a greater intensity and duration and by more severe symptoms and functional disabilities than is normal.

Many things can contribute to clinical depression. For some, a number of factors seem to be involved, while for others a single factor can trigger the illness. Often, people become depressed for no apparent reason. **Regardless of the causal factors involved, clinical depression needs to be diagnosed and treated.** It is important to remember that clinical depression can happen to anyone at any age.

Causal factors of depression

- **Biological** - People with depression typically have too little or too much of certain brain chemicals, called "neurotransmitters." Changes in these brain chemicals may cause, or contribute to, clinical depression.
- **Cognitive** - **People with negative thinking patterns** - people who are pessimistic, have low self-esteem, worry too much or feel they have little control over life events - are more likely to develop clinical depression.
- **Genetic** - **A family history of clinical depression increases the risk for developing the illness.** However, clinical

depression can also occur in people who have had no family members with depression.

- **Situational** - **Difficult life events**, including the death of a loved one, divorce, financial problems, moving to a new place or significant loss, can contribute to clinical depression.
- **Co-occurring clinical depression is more likely to occur along with certain medical illnesses**, such as stroke, heart disease, cancer, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and hormonal disorders. Co-occurring depression should be treated in addition to the physical illness. It is important that any depressive symptoms be reported to the attending physician.
- **Medications** - **Some medications for various medical illnesses can actually cause clinical depression.** That's why it is also important to have patients talk to their doctor about all the medications they are taking.

Who is available to help?

The first step in managing clinical depression is being able to talk to a doctor or other qualified mental health professional.

First discussing the symptoms being experienced with a physician normally results in recommendations for a physical checkup to see if there is any underlying physical cause for the depressive symptoms. If clinical depression is diagnosed, the physician may make referrals to a psychiatrist or mental health specialist.



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Mental health professionals who are not physicians can provide psychotherapy and often work closely with psychiatrists who can prescribe antidepressant drugs to ensure that their patients receive needed medications.

Sources of payment

Normally private insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, health maintenance organization (HMO), or other type of managed care plan will cover costs for treatment.

Most communities have publicly-funded mental health centers and other mental health programs that calculate the cost of many services according to what patients can afford to pay. This is called a “sliding-scale” or “sliding-fee” basis of payment.

If you have trouble accessing treatment, contact Rimrock Foundation for further assistance.

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